

THE
APOSTOLIC RITE
OF
Confirmation.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO SERMONS PREACHED
BEFORE HIS CONGREGATION,

ON
SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 1867,

BY
T. BEDFORD JONES, M. A., LL. D., (DUBLIN.)
Missionary Priest of St. Alban's Parish, Ottawa.

Price Six Pence.

All profits arising from the Sale of this Edition to be devoted to the
Building Fund of S. Alban's Church (Free Seat), Ottawa.

OTTAWA:
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1867.

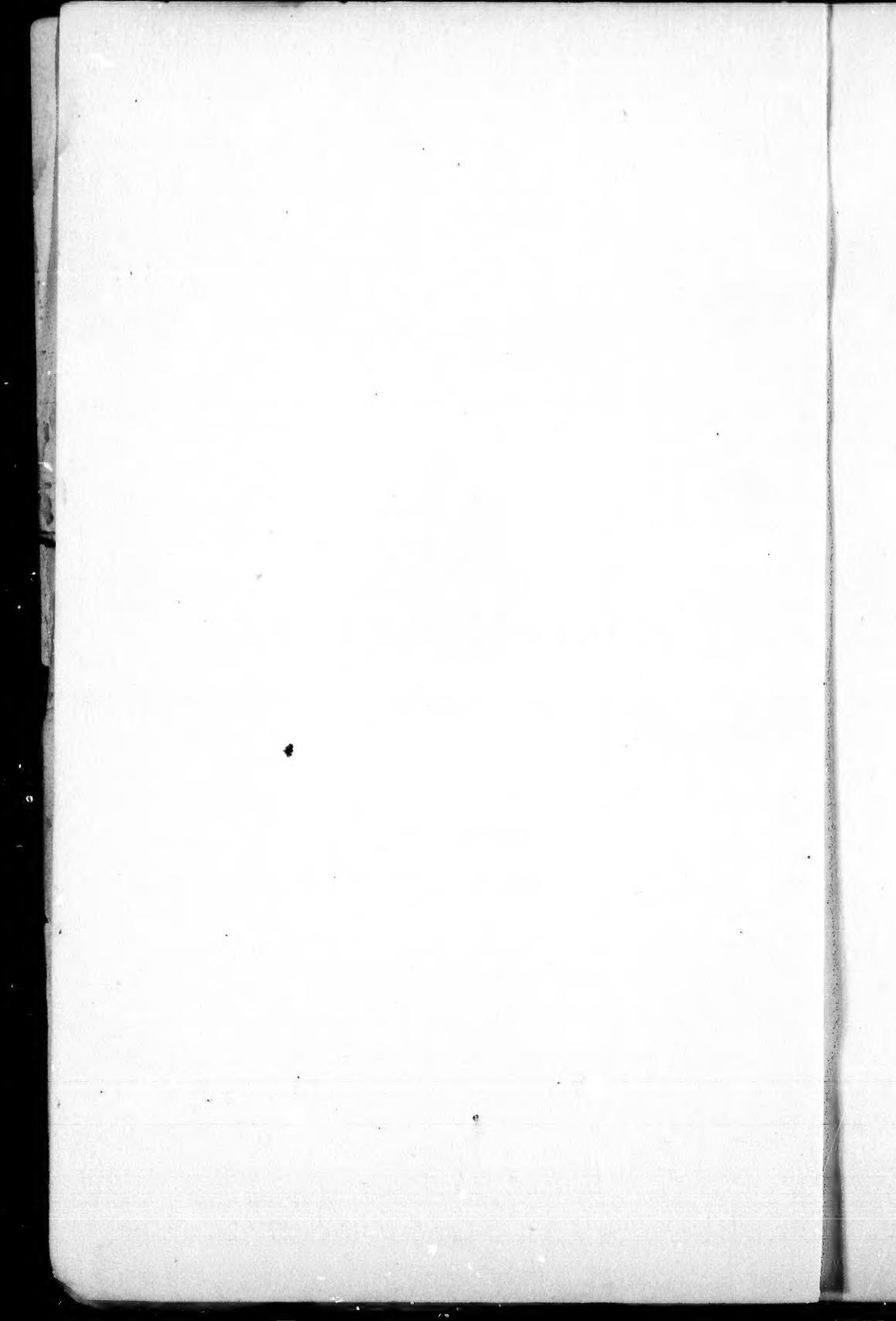


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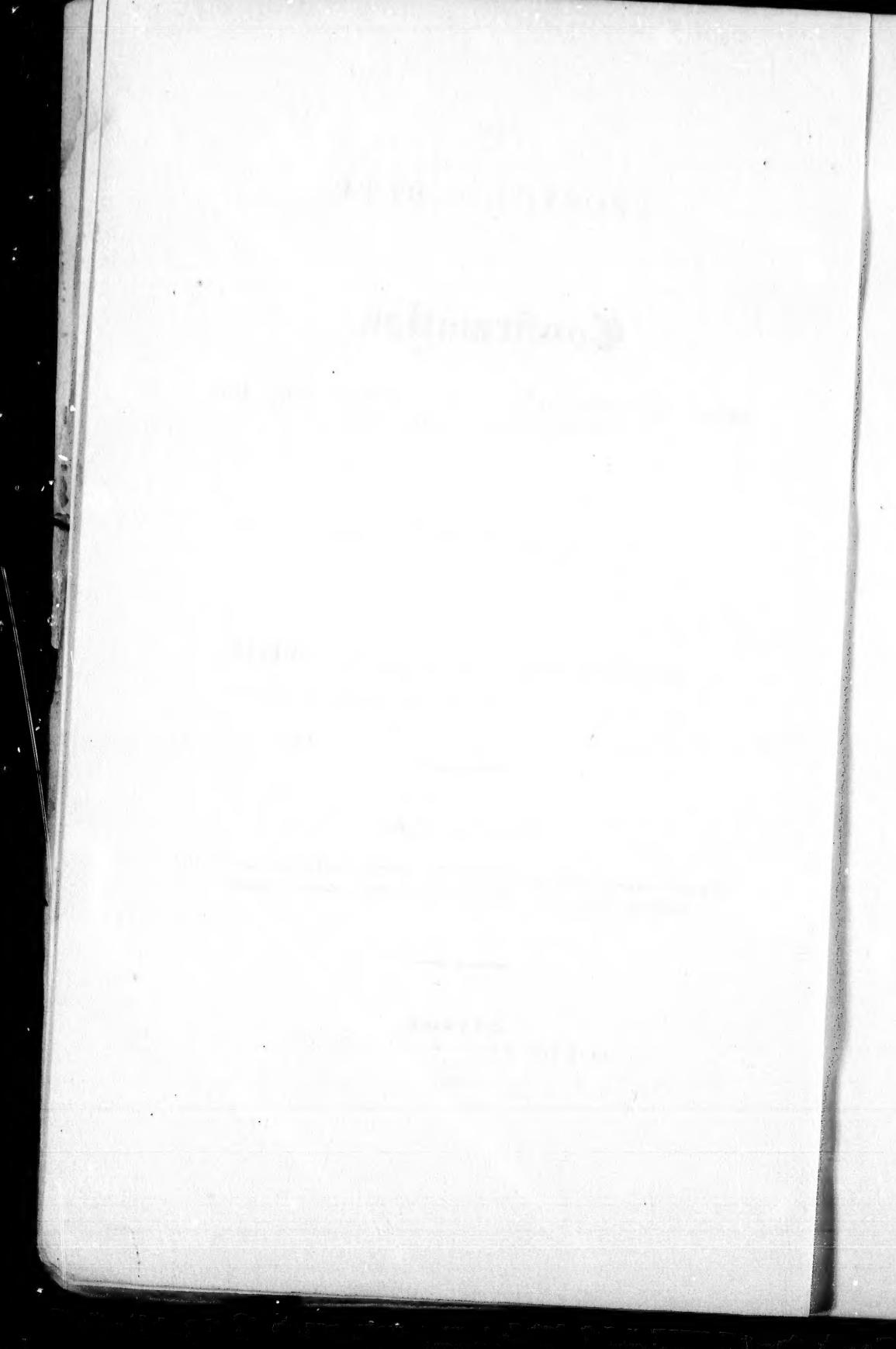
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TO

MY BISHOP

THE RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN TRAVERS LEWIS, D. D., LL. D.,

With the humble hope that it may be useful

IN THE

DIOCESE OF ONTARIO,

Where the Anglo-Catholic Church, freed from State control,
is being restored to primitive discipline and purity, under the
wise and godly rule of its Chief Pastor, supported by a united
body of faithful Clergy,

I offer this little treatise,

In all respect and affection.

Septuagesima, 1867.



THE APOSTOLIC RITE
OF
CONFIRMATION,
&c., &c.

The doctrine of Baptisms and Laying-on-of-hands. Heb. vi. 2.

We have come, my Brethren, for the first time, in our new parish, to a season when the Rite of Confirmation is about to be administered. Although from its frequency—a happy improvement on bygone days—people seem now somewhat better informed than hitherto of its nature and its obligations, yet it is obviously the duty of your Minister not to let so important an event in our church-proceedings pass by without the notice it deserves. Besides this, it were only what may be expected by those, who, as parents of families, are interested in the Christian profession of the younger members, who, we presume, have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as well as by the young persons themselves, some of whom may now be hesitating, and shrinking from coming forward to avow their determination to be for ever the servants and soldiers of the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**; it were only, I say, what may be expected from your minister that he should explain *the meaning of the Ordinance*, state *the authority on which it rests*, and enforce *its obligations on all who have not yet been partakers of its benefits*. To these points may be added a few remarks regarding the *differences of its administration* in the various branches of the Catholic Church.

I. CONFIRMATION is with us a Rite in which those who have been baptized expressly and publicly dedicate themselves to the

service of God, in their own names ratifying the promises made on their behalf when presented at the baptismal Font. They were then admitted to membership in Christ's Holy Catholic Church, the outward sign of His inward grace was administered, and a direct interest given in the promises of His Gospel. This is, you know, what the church calls *Regeneration*, a condition termed in the Church Catechism *a state of salvation*. But an express stipulation was then entered into for them, that they should *renounce* what God has forbidden, *believe* what God has revealed, and *practice* what God has enjoined. Having attained years of discretion, they are called upon to renew this stipulation in their own persons, with their own mouths; to acknowledge the obligation to fulfil it, and bind themselves in dependence on divine grace to its actual performance. It is wisely ordered that the ratification and acknowledgment should be made openly and solemnly in the house of prayer and in presence of the Bishop, to whose high and sacred office alone belongs the power of administering this Rite, and conveying its benefits. Acting as the commissioner of the Great Bishop of soul, he assures the candidate of God's favour, God's love as a Father, and prays that God will defend His child with His heavenly grace, will cause him or her to continue His child for ever, and daily increase more and more in his Holy Spirit, and, accompanying this prayer with the imposition of hands as a successor of Christ's Apostles, he thereby confirms and strengthens the young Christian in all holy purposes, in faith, in hope, and in love.

And here to meet a common but erroneous notion, I must be careful to observe, that *Confirmation makes nothing a duty which is not a duty already*. Confirmed or not, it is the bounden duty of us all, when once baptized into Christ's Name, to repent of sin, to believe the Gospel of our Lord, to love and obey

God. With our Anglican church, as distinct from the Greek and Roman communions, the design of the Ordinance is to revive the early impressions of religion in the heart, to stir up the wills and strengthen the resolutions to live a godly life, and to send forth the young soldier of the cross fully armed for the strife with sin in this evil world. Do not then imagine that because you decline to come forward, you are at liberty to disobey God's commandments and live as you like. Do not imagine that by neglect of this Apostolic Institution you can partake of the benefits of Baptism without incurring its obligations. Persevere in disregarding these, and Baptism can have no other effect than that of rising up in judgment against you, and aggravating your final condemnation. Sail you must over the stormy waters of life to a haven of rest or unrest for eternity. As you are about being launched from the shallows of childhood into the depths of an unfathomable and treacherous ocean, should you not at such a critical time earnestly seek the wise and loving guidance of the Church's master-builders, and receive the parting benison of the Church pronounced by her chief officer,—of that Church the very Spouse of Christ, in whom dwells His Spirit, who has fostered all your past years and taught you from infancy all God's revealed truths—should you not now dutifully seek her solemn blessing and thus begin with the best hope of future success and safety your perplexing and perilous voyage “from death to life, from woe to bliss?”

II. But now what are the *grounds on which Confirmation rest?*

a. First of all on *the authority of Holy Scripture*. In the Acts of the Apostles (chap. viii) we have the following fact recorded:—A large number of persons were converted to Christianity in Samaria, by the preaching of S. Philip the

Deacon, and from his hands received baptism. On this being made known to the Apostles at Jerusalem, they immediately sent two of their number to lay their hands on the converts, and pray that they might receive the Holy Ghost. You observe it was a special function of Apostles, something above and beyond the office of a deacon, (one qualified merely to *initiate* new members,) this laying-on-of-hands. Again (in the xix. chap.) we find that S. Paul came to Ephesus, and found there certain disciples, of whom he enquired whether they had received the Holy Ghost, evidently by the laying-on-of-hands. If they had not, his intention was to communicate the blessing himself, having apostolic rank. He supposed they had already been admitted to the church by the initiatory rite, for you may remember, when they said in reply to his question, that they had not heard of the Holy Ghost having been given to believers in Christ,* he asks in surprise, “unto what then were ye baptized?” And on learning that it was only as disciples of S. John the Baptist, he caused them first to be baptized as *Christians*, and then he laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. In both these instances, Imposition of hands is closely connected with Baptism.

Here *an objection* may be raised—was not all this laying-on-of-hands intended to confer the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit? True, we *reply*, but though all these *Gifts*, the manifestation of an in-dwelling *Spirit*, were in that age granted because in that age necessary, still the *Grace* that enlightens, the Grace that sanctifies, the Grace that consoles the heart, is just as needful now as in the days of the Apostles. This Grace is given as fully and as copiously now as it was then; and from the fact that miraculous *Gifts* are

* This is the true meaning of the passage. See Conybeare and Howson L. & E. of S. Paul, and Wordsworth's Gk. Test. in loc.

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withheld, no good reason can be assigned why this ancient impressive and salutary Rite should be discontinued, or that we should cease to employ a means of Grace in operation from the very earliest days of the Christian Church. The Apostolic age was indeed an age of miracles, and everything in the Christian Ordinances then partook of that characteristic. Those very acts, most vital to the life of God in the soul, were employed as miraculous agencies. For example, Faith, the great mean of our justification, was to be to the early Christians the instrument of working miracles. Wondrous "Signs" were to follow them that believed, and they did follow them. But surely, it cannot be said, that it was to that age alone that Faith was limited, or that its sole use was for working miracles? Why then is this argued of Laying-on-of-hands? Why should we suppose that because this Rite was employed in communicating miraculous Gifts as well as ordinary but far more valuable Graces, that therefore it must be restricted to the miraculous age, while Faith employed in the very same way is by all admitted to be necessary to the end of time?

It is right also to say, that it is more than doubtful, if *all* those on whom hands were laid, did receive extraordinary gifts. St. Paul asks, "Are *all* workers of miracles? have *all* the gifts of healing? do *all* speak with tongues?" (1 Cor., xii. 29.) Surely this implies that, though all were the recipients of the *graces* of the Holy Spirit bestowed by the imposition of hands, *all* were not endowed with the visible *gifts* of Miracles, of Healing, of Tongues. Those *gifted* were the few among the many. And it was to exalt the ordinary graces comprised in that one word "**LOVE**" or "**CHARITY**," that was "more excellent" and more lasting than any other gift however desirable, even than **FAITH** and **HOPE**, that the Apostle writes, wishing to allay the envy or disappointment of those Christians who had

received none, or only what they considered inferior visible *gifts* in addition to the ordinary inward *graces*, the common and blessed reward of all without exception.

There is, however, another passage of Scripture that I would ask you to connect with the two I have already quoted. It is that which I have taken for the text, (Hebrews vi.) S. Paul here speaks of "*the principles*," (*i. e.* the fundamentals, the first elements) of the doctrine of Christ, and he declares these elementary truths to be Repentance and Faith, Baptism and the Laying-on-of-hands, Resurrection of the dead and Eternal Judgment. Now, brethren, we all know how essential to any religious system are its first principles: how dependent the safety of the superstructure on the solidity of the foundation. And can we imagine that one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ has become effete and useless,—that any part of the foundation has been purposely taken away? Surely not. Just look at the other things with which Laying-on-of-hands is bound up, and then say if the Apostle speaks of what was ever to become obsolete. When REPENTANCE and FAITH are cast aside, when BAPTISM is no longer required, when the hope of the RESURRECTION of the dead and the expectation of ETERNAL JUDGMENT are to be abandoned, then, but not till then, may we believe is to be rejected this truth also. Until then it is clear that, be it administered as it may, it is one of the elementary Institutions in the establishment of every Christian church. And now, my brethren, believing that this Laying-on-of-hands is an abiding ordinance to be observed in all ages, I would bid you look round on the Catholic world and say, if it be not the Rite of Confirmation, what else can it be? All who would build upon the same foundation with the Apostle, must have this doctrine among their first principles; and I would ask, where have they this doctrine—what part does it form of their system, if

they reject the Rite of Confirmation? Assuredly we should all unite in ever maintaining Apostolic principles, and perpetuating Apostolic practices, and thus have a sure ground of confidence that we ourselves are "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the chief Corner-stone." What other Laying-on-of-hands have we to put in its place, if we reject Confirmation? Absolutely nothing else.

It has, however, been said, that these words of S. Paul refer to the Ordination of Ministers, to what is termed Holy Orders. It is worth while to examine this interpretation of which a moment's consideration will finally dispose. Let us read the passage with attention. Now observe, that the inspired writer is here treating of *subjects that are of universal application*, and not at all confined to a limited number. All the other elementary truths he enumerates are as necessary for the people as for their teachers. They are *first principles to be taught to every Christian*. All need Repentance; all must have Faith; Baptism is intended for all; every individual believer has a hope of the Resurrection of the dead; all must stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ. On what ground then, can we refuse to the doctrine of Laying-on-of-hands the same universal application? But look at the 12th verse of chapter v. This shows us at a glance the sort of persons whom the Apostle was addressing. They were not presbyters, nor deacons, nor ministers of any order. He says, "*When for the time you ought to be teachers.*" That is, they had been professing Christians long enough, if they had profited by their opportunities, to have been able and qualified *to teach*. So far is he from speaking of the Laying-on-of-hands in ordination, that he tells them, in consequence of their sad backwardness in the knowledge of divine things, that it was needful to instruct them over again in the first simple truths they had learned in the beginning. And so he takes the oppor-

tunity of reminding them in passing of those "principles of the oracles of God," which they had been taught long before.

But there remains one more consideration, which, I think, will place the matter beyond all reasonable doubt. St. Paul, you may observe, mentions *six principles*, and he arranges these in pairs: Repentance and Faith, Baptism and Laying-on-of-hands, Resurrection of the dead and Eternal Judgment. It is obvious that he makes this disposition because of their mutual connexion. We all know how closely allied are Repentance and Faith, how frequently they are mentioned together in Scripture. We all acknowledge that the Resurrection is preparatory to the final Judgment. Is it not then but reasonable to conclude that the other pair of principles are also joined together, because the one is closely connected with the other? This being unquestionable, there is no doubt that the doctrine of Laying-on-of-hands is identical with what we call Confirmation, for this alone of Christian ordinances is closely connected with Baptism, this alone fulfils the Apostle's description of a Rite not or advanced and learned disciples, much less teachers, but for the young, for "babes in Christ." And this seems to have been the very mind of the framers of our revised Prayer Book. For when in 1549, the Office was headed simply CONFIRMATION; in 1604, (when the German or Genevan influence was being shaken off by our bishops,) the title was altered to "The Order of Confirmation, or LAYING-ON-OF-HANDS."

b. Well, my brethren, let us suppose these Scriptural proofs not satisfactory, and that there is still ground for difference of opinion as to the obligation of this ordinance. Is there no way of settling the difference? We know how often there is a dispute about the meaning of an old legal enactment, and how then we submit the case to the judges of the law; and how do they decide? Not by simply interposing their own fiat or con-

sulting their own feeling as to the interpretation of the words in the statute, but by enquiring into the judgment of those who have acted upon the statute ever since it became law. They look into what are called *precedents*, and they decide accordingly.

Now here is a principle of the Gospel embodied in the practice and set forth in the writings of the holy Apostles 1800 years ago. But after 1500 or 1600 hundred years men begin to differ about its application, some restrict it to the age of miracles, others regard it as a duty and ordinance incumbent on all Christians in all ages. Why not enquire how it was understood by those immediately following the Apostles? Most remarkable and unanimous is the testimony of these **EARLY FATHERS** as to the general practice and opinions of the primitive church.

About 80 years after St. John flourished **TERTULLIAN**, an eminent Christian writer. He says plainly enough, that "*after Baptism succeeds Laying-on-of-hands, by solemn prayer calling for and invoking the Holy Spirit, upon which that most blessed Spirit willingly descends upon the bodies thus sanctified and blessed.*" S. **CYPRIAN**, Bishop of Carthage, who lived only 40 or 50 years after him, commenting on the Acts viii. writes : "*The same thing is practised among us ; they who are baptised in the church are presented to its governors, (the bishops,) that by their prayers and Laying-on-of-hands they may obtain the Holy Ghost, and be perfected with the seal of Christ.*" In the same century and to the same effect it is mentioned by S. Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 200, by Origen, A. D., 210, by Firmilian, A. D. 250, by Cornelius, A. D. 260. Similar testimony is borne by the great S. Augustine and other illustrious historians of the fourth and fifth centuries. S. **JEROME**, who translated the Scriptures into the then vulgar (the latin) tongue, and died

in 420, writes that, "*the custom of the whole Christian Church has adopted it as a law, that while persons are baptized in the inferior towns by priests and deacons, the Bishop travels out to them to lay his hands on them, and imparts the Holy Spirit.*" And again, "*the celebration of this ordinance was conferred upon the Bishops for their honor. If you ask where it is written, it is written in the Acts of the Apostles. . But if there were no authority from Scripture, the consent of the whole world, in this particular, would be equivalent to a law.*"

c. And thus down to the days of the Reformation, with a difference (that I shall presently explain) in its mode of administration between the Eastern and Western Churches, was Confirmation observed. Then we find the celebrated CALVIN, usually so violent in opposition to every custom, good or bad, that he believed peculiar to Rome, and who would have, if possible, set down Confirmation as a superstition, (for the obvious reason, that it could be administered only by the Episcopal order, which, in his revolutionary scheme of government he was forced to forego,) we find, I say, Calvin, declaring in his comment on Heb. chap. vi., that *this one passage*, (on which we have been dwelling,) *was abundantly sufficient to prove that the rite derived its origin from the Apostles.* The Reformer BEZA held the same view.

LUTHER, as is well known, retained Confirmation, and this Rite is still practised by that large body of Protestants, called Lutherans, at the present day. Indeed, before receiving any civil appointment in Prussia and Denmark, it is necessary to produce a certificate of Confirmation.

I might quote the opinions of our own most learned Bishops of the 16th and 17th centuries and many others of highest authority in the Anglican Church, but time will not permit, and I must bring to an end this part of the subject, by stating

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the opinion of one or two eminent puritan and dissenting theo-
logians. *Dr. Owen*, and *John Wesley* subscribe Calvin's inter-
pretation of this passage in Hebrews. *The confession of faith
adopted by the Baptist Community* contains a passage to this
effect: "We believe that the Laying-on-of-hands with prayer
upon baptized believers, as such, is *an ordinance of Christ* and
ought to be submitted to by all those who are permitted to par-
take of the Lord's Supper; and that the end of the Ordinance
is not for the extraordinary *gifts* of the Spirit, but for a farther
reception of the Holy Spirit of promise, for the addition of
the graces of the Spirit and influences thereof, to confirm,
strengthen and comfort them in Christ Jesus."

Dr. Adam Clarke, after he had become a Wesleyan preacher,
sought and obtained Confirmation at the hands of the then
Bishop of Bristol (Dr. Bagot) and in a letter written two years
before his death, expressed himself as strongly on the subject
as could the most decided Churchman.

The testimony of Dr Coleman, an eminent Minister of the
Congregational body, is so remarkable that I must quote his
language: "The confession of the name of Christ among us,
is very lame, and will be so, until *the discipline which Christ
has ordained* be restored, and *the Rite of Confirmation* be
recovered to its first use and solemnity. It is not enough that
you have been baptized and had a Christian education, and
have given your attendance on the public worship of Christ,
but you are to say that you stand to your baptism, and take
that vow upon you, and confirm and ratify all that was done
by your parents in the solemn duty of devoting you to God.
This is no novelty, innovation, or unnecessary solemnity, as
some call every thing which does not agree with the custom of
their country or Church, but it is an imitation of the ancient
and *apostolical order*, and an establishment *altogether suited to
the nature* of the Christian religion."

Other similar testimony might be given to almost any extent.

Such, my brethren, is the authority of *Holy Scripture* in regard to Confirmation. Such is the testimony of *the Church* in every age, and such are the opinions of the best-informed men of *her opponents* in modern days. How reasonable and how proper it is for those baptized in infancy to recognize the Vow made on their behalf openly before the Church. I deem it unnecessary to prove. But this I may just observe, that if any person be admitted to a Society, proposed as it were by two or more existing members who guarantee his respectability, and from uncontrollable circumstances at the time, he be unable to sign the rules or take the obligation of membership, but yet receive, for several years, all the privileges and benefits possible from his admission, it is his plain duty as a man of honor and gratitude, to come forward at the first opportunity, avow his obligation and satisfy the other members that he is one with themselves in feeling and principle.

It may be said that the Rite has been perverted by the Church of Rome. Alas, that it should be so! But while we have retained the Rite, we have left the perversion to Rome. We believe that Church has perverted also Baptism, the Holy Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, yet surely the perversion does not destroy the necessity for these things? No, my brethren, and we may be well assured that because others have been guilty of corrupting and abusing them, we shall not be held innocent for abandoning or neglecting them, now that the mediæval adulteration has been thrust out, and the verities themselves are presented in their primitive purity. No, to argue against the use of anything from the abuse of it, would lead us to discard what is undeniably excellent, indeed almost every blessing on earth, temporal and spiritual. But I am sorry to say, that many persons among ourselves who should know better, do not see

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the stupidity of this course, and would have nothing retained or revived in the Church, however ancient, admirable, and useful it can be proved to be, because the Church of Rome or some modern non-conforming sect has had the wisdom to keep it or adopt it, while *we* have had the folly or the misfortune to lose it, or to neglect it for a time.

III. Enough, I trust, has been said to make the authority on which the Rite rests plain and satisfactory. Let me now proceed to inquire what *advantages* may be expected to follow its due observance.

First of all, *an increased supply of grace* to enable young Christians to fulfil the engagements into which they have entered,—*grace directly imparted by the Holy Ghost*. You may ask, will the imposition of the Bishop's hands of itself secure this blessing; does the Holy Ghost descend at his mere will? No, brethren, certainly not. **THE BLESSING IS FROM GOD**, as the institution for conveying it is from Him. The Bishop is **only God's instrument**, and *in himself* has no power to do less or more than God in His mercy wills. No doubt the Lord's will is, that through this Rite of His own appointment (for we believe that it is still the very same as that practised by the Apostles, taught of the Lord the Head of the Church, and blessed by Him) the Holy Ghost shall descend upon His faithful servants. No doubt it is the Lord's will that when the Bishop's hands are placed upon a head, beneath which throbs a heart broken and contrite, a heart, like David's, thirsting after God, full of faith and love and strong desire to be like and to be with the living God, then the Apostolic benediction will not be without gracious effect in the soul. Yes, if God has *generally* promised His Holy Spirit to those that *ask Him*, we cannot believe that observance of this Ordinance, specially appointed for invoking the favor and assistance of the Holy Ghost, will be in vain.

Increase of spiritual vitality, and the assurance of God's gracious help may well follow due compliance with this Rite. Our Heavenly Father always waits to be gracious, and when in His Presence, before His Apostolic ambassador and the assembly of Christians, we devote ourselves, body, soul and spirit, all we have and all we are, to His service, we cannot entertain a doubt but that He will accept the reasonable and well-pleasing offering. Here we must have special encouragement for reliance on the love and protection of Him who has said : "*I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me.*" (Prov. viii. 17.)

But besides this, taking lower ground, *may not so solemn an engagement exercise a salutary influence over the conduct all through life?* Most unquestionably. When tempted to yield to the seductions of an evil Heart, an evil World, an evil Spirit, will not the memory of this engagement fortify against temptation? Will it not constantly strengthen the heart to remember how body and soul have been enlisted in the service of Christ Jesus, our Lord, and all the life dedicated to His glory? Will it not give tenfold force to the question,—"*How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?*—How can I sin against that God to Whom I bound myself by a pledge so binding and on an occasion so afflicting ;—that God Who has been so gracious, adopting me into His family, and condescending to make a covenant even with me ;—that God Whose I am and Whom I serve, and Whose all-seeing eye marks every deed, every word, every thought!"

My brethren, I know from ministerial experience, that the memory of this Ordinance has thus been a most beneficial, I might say, a most magical monitor. Pardon my quoting the words of a dear young friend, a parishioner of mine in bygone years, words that I deemed worthy of preservation at the time :—

"I often think what a privilege and comfort it is to be allowed to address God as our Father and as One who knows all secrets and motives from which our actions spring; and Christ, as a High Priest and a Saviour Who knows our infirmities and can pity and support us and intercede for us in all dangers and necessities. Sometimes I think I could give up all, even life itself, for JESUS my Saviour, Who, I know, is always near me, and *Whom I swore I would serve and love all the days of my life when I was confirmed.*" Do not such words show what a deep and lasting impression is made on the tender heart of a young Christian in this sacred Ordinance?

IV. And now, in closing, permit me first to address a few words to those who have been already confirmed.

My dear brethren, whether old or young, I would exhort you, at such recurring seasons, to examine how far you have kept in mind your obligations and promises. If these have been neglected, humble yourselves because of that negligence. Reflect on the peculiar guilt incurred, seek pardon through the all-atonning Blood of Christ, and pray for the renewal of your hearts by the Holy Spirit unto obedience. Do this, I beseech you, while through Him access may yet be had to the Father's throne of grace. And even if in some measure these obligations have been fulfilled, I would still exhort you to remember with sorrow and humility, how scanty is that measure, and to make this a season of prayer for grace to walk more worthily of the high vocation wherewith you are called. Oh, never fancy that you can have too much grace, never forget that *all* your sufficiency is of God. Enemies still encompass you on every side, and it is only in the name of the Lord you can destroy them. In weakness, remember, is your strength made perfect. Day and night in body and soul, you must commit yourselves as implicitly and unreservedly to God now, as on that solemn occasion,

when in the presence of God and the assembled Church, you boldly and openly ratified your baptismal vows, and once for all (the occasion, you know, will never come again) professed yourselves the loyal and faithful servants and soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, and promised with the help of the SPIRIT's grace, to walk in his laws, obey his commands, and love Him truly all the days of your life.

To all who have not yet been confirmed among my congregation, I would make an earnest request, that they would consider the various points to which I have to-day called attention. You, my brethren, may thus be enabled to appreciate the nature of this Rite, its importance and its advantages. If you are shrinking timidly from the public ratification, I would say a word of encouragement. The evil Spirit of Antichrist it is that prompts and fosters your backwardness. Let him not beguile you. God has adapted different means of grace to the different stages of your progress, and if you fail to use these means, you cannot expect to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps some of you may fancy, or others may tell you, you are *too young* for such a solemn duty. Are you too young to be assaulted by the temptations of the world, the flesh or the devil? Will you run the risk of losing, by delay, your present tenderness of conscience, your present hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and thus of having your heart more and more alienated from God by filling it with love for the vices and the vanities of the world,—a world lying in wickedness?

On the other hand do not imagine you are *too old* to derive a blessing from this ordinance. It is one of the means of grace in Christ's Holy Church, and if you are not too old to avail yourselves of other means, and obtain their advantages, why doubt that a blessing does not await attendance upon this also? But

if you are old, and yourselves slight this Rite of Confirmation, oh, keep not back the young. Think of those blessed words : “*Suffer the little children to come into Me, and forbid them not.*” Hear the command of the Saviour, “*Feed my lambs,*” and S. Paul’s exhortation to bring up children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” Hear finally the explicit direction of your wise mother church : “*Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him.*” Oh, if you be true Christian parents and loyal churchmen who have sought in earnest prayer that you should be faithful stewards of the charge committed to you by God, you will not cherish discouraging counsels, but you will endeavour to make your children always feel that they are indeed privileged members of Christ’s Holy Catholic Church. You will remind them constantly of their responsibilities as such, and thus keep their feet in that pure and undefiled faith to which they were solemnly pledged ; day by day strengthening them with spiritual food by all private and public means of grace, so that they may be at last fit for the due reception of those holy Mysteries, the most affecting proof of a Saviour’s precious love, ordained for our great and endless comfort.

Alas, too many parents expose their children to the influences of error both in doctrine and living,—leave them a prey to the subtle seductions of vice and infidelity, of heresy and schism,—teach them by example as well as by foolish counsel, to regard with indifference early habits of evil, so lasting, so terrible in their consequences, and to look on the glorious promises of Christ the Son of God to His Church and His children as empty delusions. But for all these things God will call them to judgment.

To you, my dear young friends; who have resolved to come forward, and nobly confess before men that you are, and intend

for ever more to be, the soldiers of the Cross, the faithful disciples of the **LORD JESUS**, it is not needful at present to say more. I shall have frequent opportunities of speaking to you in the classes now forming. But, my brethren, we may all of us, people and priest, unite in offering in behalf of these young Christians the prayer of the holy Apostle: that "**THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, may grant them according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ;—that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that they being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth, and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God.**

AND NOW UNTO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US ;—UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS THROUHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.”

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APPENDIX.*

Originally, *i. e.*, in the second century, IMPOSITION OF HANDS followed at once on Baptism. This is clearly stated by all the earliest Christian writers. It was sometimes called “THE SEAL” and “THE CHRISM”† or “THE UNCTION.” Indeed it was only in mediæval or modern days that the rite was named CONFIRMATION. This designation is not found in any of the first Greek or Latin Christian writers. The ordinary word used by the Greek Fathers is *chrism* equivalent to the Latin *unction*, and refers to the grace of the Holy Spirit bestowed on the catechumen, of which *oil* was the symbol. As of old, so still our own Sovereigns have oil poured on their heads at coronation, with this signification, and as each new Christian is at his initiation consecrated for ever a king and priest to God, so in the early church this symbol of spiritual grace and benediction was designed to teach that each disciple of Christ was “the anointed of the Lord.” The word *chrism* is that employed by the Apostle John in his first epistle, (chap. ii. 20,) “Ye have an *unction* from the Holy One.” And by S. Paul, (2 Cor. i. 21,) “He which hath *anointed* us is God, who hath also *sealed* us and given us the *earnest of the Spirit* in our hearts.” Here, by the way, we may observe, that almost the earliest Christian writer after the Apostles, Tertullian, mentions the act of anointing as accompanying the laying-on-of-hands, and says it was of primitive discipline, (*de pristinâ disciplinâ*,) practised by the very first Christians. It is therefore certain that the use of an

*This was preached as an introductory part of the second sermon, but is now placed in its present position, as less interfering with the continuity of the discourse.

† Chrism is a composition of oil and balm, blessed by the bishop, still retained in the administration by both the Greek and Roman Communions, but its use has been discontinued by all the reformed catholic bodies.

unguent was introduced at a very early period, and many most eminent divines, both of ancient and modern times, consider that the two passages above quoted imply its existence and employment in the days of, and by the Apostles. All, however, that is stated in the Acts, is, that the gifts of the Holy Ghost came with the simple imposition of hands, and the Reformers in our Church adopted the view, that oil was an unnecessary adjunct.

Another name generally employed for the Rite was the **SEAL**; it being the seal and consummation of baptismal grace, and the scriptural authority for this rests on that passage of the apostle's second epistle to the Corinthians already quoted, where *sealing by the Spirit* is joined to the *anointing by God*. In his letter to the Ephesians he similarly says: "In whom, after ye believed, ye were *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of Promise, and again in the same Epistle "The Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption." (Ephes. i. 13., iv. 30.) It was the opinion of the illustrious St. Augustine, that both these passages refer to the Laying-on-of-hands.

Following ancient custom, and using still the same old words in their language, the Greek Church has preserved this mode of administration for which she asserts the authority of Scripture. The priest immediately after the baptism of the infant, and the prayer of thanksgiving for Regeneration, similar to our own, anoints the child with the holy chrism, and says: "*The Seal of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*"

You may ask, how is it that a priest or presbyter and not a bishop administers confirmation, which beyond all question, is a violation of the Apostolic and primitive practice. This at once brings us to the differences in the *the time of its reception by the baptized* in the various branches of the church.

In the primitive age, as I have said, and up to the ninth cen-

tury, there was no exception to the rule of the whole Catholic Church, in regard to the Imposition-of-hands *immediately* following the baptism of a convert or a child. It was then customary for almost all baptisms to take place on one of the three great Festivals of Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost or Whitsunday. The catechumens and children were assembled in some cathedral or convenient place, and robed in white were baptized by the presbyters in presence of the Bishop. *He* then invoked the Holy Spirit and laid his hands on their heads. By degrees as missionary priests and deacons were sent forth, and gathered in converts to the faith, old and young had to be often baptized where were no cathedrals and no bishops, and without waiting for the Festivals. Therefore there were two courses open in regard to the time of Confirmation. Either the right to confirm must be given to an inferior order or the baptized must wait until the Bishop could come to lay-on-hands. The Eastern churches, unwisely and unscripturally, as we think, chose the former course. They gave the *presbyter* authority to confirm or lay-on-hands, reserving to the Bishop the composition and consecration of the chrism, with which the Rite was administered. The Western churches decided to defer the reception of the rite, which was left, as before, exclusively in the power and office of a Bishop. Beyond all doubt this was the Apostolic and primitive usage. This is proved by the authority of Scripture and the whole weight of early Christian testimony. (See S. Jerome's statement.) Accordingly, in all the West, the two ceremonies, Baptism and Confirmation, once and for so long a time, closely united, became altogether separated, and at last the Church of Rome raised the latter to the dignity of a distinct Sacrament of equal honor with the two only "*Sacraments of the Gospel.*" (Art. xxv.) Besides this innovation, she has abandoned the most Apostolic part of the whole

Ceremony, the laying-on-of-hands, and makes use only of the Chrism, which it is doubtful the Apostles ever employed. Here again was a plain forsaking of well authenticated primitive practice. To this, in all things, our Anglican Church, at the Reformation, strove to return. Indeed, there seem to have been *two grand guiding principles* of the noble and wise leaders in that great movement. In all their formularies and by all their changes, they endeavoured to establish the **PRIMITIVE USAGE** of the Church and the **EDIFICATION** of her children. And this will give us the key to a few seeming inconsistencies, for it is clear that the *usages* of the people of the East in the 2nd or 3rd century would sometimes not tend to the *edification* of the people of England in the 16th or 17th. Our Reformers, therefore, rejected the *Roman* view and mode of Confirmation as having "grown out of a corrupt following of the Apostles," (Art. xxv.) and at the same time refused to revert to the ancient practise of making Confirmation an integral part or mere supplement of the Sacrament of Baptism with the *Greek* Church. She does not deny that there is a **Sacramental grace** bestowed, yet she does not honor the Rite with a name reserved for those two high and holy means of grace "ordained by Christ Himself." As a Scriptural, Apostolic and ancient Ordinance of the Christian Church, she observes it, but discards every adjunct that can possibly lead to superstition. She keeps steadily in view the edification of her members, and puts aside all that will not tend directly to this great result. Therefore, she delays the laying-on-of-hands, not merely until seven years or so after Baptism (as in the Roman Church) but until the child "can render an account of its faith," (Prayer Book 1604) and is come to years of discretion, (P. Book 1662), until it is *in the position of an adult convert*, well instructed in the first principles of the Christian religion, and after full enquiry,

resolved, of his or her own free will and accord, to continue in that blessed service to which the infant was solemnly pledged in holy Baptism. While the Rite is thus complementary to that first Sacrament, it is also introductory to the second. "*None are to be admitted to the Holy Communion until they have been confirmed or are ready and desirous of being confirmed.*" "We may consider it," as an admirable writer* on the subject observes, "as a link between the two Sacraments, instead of part of either, with a backward glance of thankfulness and acceptance at the Sacrament of Baptism, and an onward glance of introduction to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—that Sacrament which is henceforth to be with us to strengthen and support us in the wear and tear, the burden and turmoil, the dangers and temptations of the responsible life on which we are now entering." And therefore, in these days our Bishops usually require the Lord's Supper to be celebrated on the very day of Confirmation; and they earnestly hope that while in the Sacramental Presence of Christ, and with the reception of His most blessed Body and Blood, the dedication of body and soul is completed in the heart and accepted in heaven, that all the highest privileges of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, the panoply from her spiritual armoury, are at the same time imparted to the young brave and faithful soldier of the Cross. So may it be to each one of them among ourselves.

* J. S. Blunt.

It may prove of interest to state, that the first prayer in the Office of Confirmation is over 1,300 years old, being found in the Sacramentary of Gelasius (A. D. 492) whence comes also the "Prayer for Clergy and people" in our Morning and Ev. Prayer.

The English Church laid aside Chrism, it is thought, from the example of Hermann, Archbishop of Cologne, a great friend of Melancthon. Proceedings were taken against him for favouring the Reformation, and he was obliged eventually to retire from his See.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States has taken the same view, and follows the same practice as the Anglican.

In the Scandinavian Episcopal Churches Confirmation is retained, although much altered from its primitive character. After two centuries it was adopted by the Reformed Calvinistic communions. It is, in these bodies, administered about the age of fourteen, and belongs to the office of the *Minister*. In *Sweden*, says Mr. Newland, in ‘Forest Scenes,’ “a man would lose his character at once, and would be shunned by his acquaintance as a hopeless reprobate, if he neglected Confirmation or the Lord’s Supper. Few offices can be held by unconfirmed people, or by those who are not communicants, and the legislature is only the interpreter of public opinion.”

“Baptism must be performed on every child within eight days after birth, under pain of civil penalties to the parents neglecting this rite. Confirmation takes place on examination, about the age of fourteen, at the hands of the *Minister*, in presence of the congregation. The Lord’s Supper must be continually partaken of as one indispensable qualification for the enjoyment of civil rights and privileges. Disprove the participation during the previous year in the case of any individual, and his evidence in a Court of Justice is rejected.” Bohn’s Ecclesiastical Encyclopædia. See also Pratt’s Letters on the Scandinavian Churches.

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